

~~RESTRICTED~~

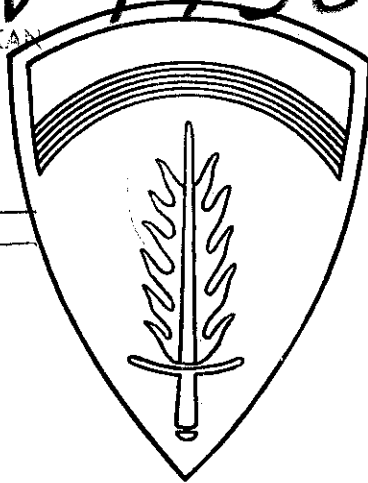
MS # B-387

N-17500.444

LIBRARY
USA CGSC FT LEAVENWORTH KAN

MAY 20 1966

ACCESSION NO _____
PO REGISTR _____



ENGLISH COPY

THOUGHTS ON WORLD WAR II

HISTORICAL DIVISION
HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES ARMY, EUROPE
FOREIGN MILITARY STUDIES BRANCH

~~RESTRICTED~~

Report Documentation Page			Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188		
Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.					
1. REPORT DATE 1947		2. REPORT TYPE		3. DATES COVERED -	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Thoughts on World War II.				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S)				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Department of the Army, Washington, DC, 20310				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT An anlysis of World War II as seen from a historic and philosophic point of view.					
15. SUBJECT TERMS					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 14	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT unclassified	b. ABSTRACT unclassified	c. THIS PAGE unclassified			

MS # B-387

Thoughts on World War II

by

Guenther Blumentritt, General der Infanterie a.D.

Translator: Anne Hall

HISTORICAL DIVISION
HEADQUARTERS
UNITED STATES ARMY, EUROPE

The War of 1939/45, as seen from a
historic-philosophic point of view.

A. Preliminary Remarks

As contemporaries, we naturally look upon this war as well as the first world war only indirectly as world-shaking events. We consider their origin and course from the political and military standpoint. Our judgment is influenced by the personal, inner experiences.

One could say that the whole world is inclined to see such shocks - which are still taking effect - "egotistically"; every nation sees her own point of view.

The practical "Realpolitik" has to consider these eventualities. The train of thought of prosaic politics necessarily has to be different from that which meditative professors and philosophers may bring out in their studies.

Nevertheless, it is tempting to look upon and understand such great events independently from the prevailing spirit of the times and the momentarily necessary "Realpolitik."

As is known from experience, universal history proves that great upheavals of the past are seen differently in every century, as soon as the feelings of later generations have become detached from past events, memories of which have already faded.

Great wars, such as those of 1914/18 or 1939/45, are like explosions of a motor which in itself is already not running smoothly.

Exactly the same is the case with the great war periods before 1914! Each respective contemporary person is, during his short life, mostly inclined to see the causes of such catastrophes, which effect him seriously, in the person of responsible men and responsible governments. However, later reflections show in most cases that these "men", these "governments" were only tools, without whom the important development would also have taken place. Therefore, we so often find conflicting opinions about great men. Every century looks upon the "man" of history with its own spirit of the times and remodels this man according to its own taste. He is used as political advertising for their own propaganda purposes. Ideas and goals, which they never had in their lifetime, are often falsely ascribed to great men. Only those episodes in their life and only those utterances are selected which seem to serve this purpose.

I am citing below a few of the many examples, whereby, of course, German and European cases predominate:

1. Genghis Khan, is on the one hand, represented as nothing else but the asiatic usurper, scourge of God and incendiary. Then again, he becomes the great statesman with remarkable talents, a man, at whose nomad's court art and science flourished.

2. Attila, at first considered the terror of Europe, - according to later descriptions - seems to have been a wise and cultured "great" man.

3. Charles the Great (to whom he belongs is a matter of dispute between the German and French people) is condemned because, for the sake

of religious belief, he completely rooted out the Saxons. Then again, however, he becomes the great emperor with political foresight, who wants to unite the "Franconians" and the "Teutons", and at whose court the arts flourish and the way is paved for the Christian religion.

4. Constantine the Great was a man who, for purely political purposes, made room for Christianity in his empire. However, his enemies look upon him as an emperor, whose personal and political actions were anything but "Christian."

5. The great emperors of the Franconians, the Saxons and the Hohenstaufen are, to this day, still measured according to two kinds of standards.

6. The great men among the Popes are constantly subject to difference of opinion.

7. New light is constantly thrown upon the actions of Charles V., Wallenstein, Gustav Adolf, Charles XII., Napoleon, Frederick the Great, Bismarck, etc., and they and many other men are constantly either being condemned or praised to the skies.

And yet, all these men are only exponents of their time!

If Napoleon I. had been born 50 years earlier or later than was actually the case, he would have remained a nonentity! He had to be born at the ~~time~~ of social and spiritual revolution in France, in order to fulfill the mission with which the ~~era~~ had entrusted him. No man, who is called "great" today, would have become "great", if he had lived during a different epoch, under a different spirit of the age.

B. Changes

There were more really "great" statesmen during former times than there are today. Let us just take the last few centuries! There we had Richelieu, Mazarin, Fleury, Gambetta, Clemenceau, or the Pitts, Palmerstone, Disraeli, etc., or George Washington, Lincoln, etc. or Metternich or the Comte de Cavour, or Bismarck.

In some way or other, every nation admires the eminence and foresight of these great statesmen.

What is the reason for this? People of today have the same qualities and perhaps greater knowledge! But they are more bound by the evolution of nations into parliamentary communities. They have to take a thousand things into consideration and cannot always do that which reason has advised them to do long since. Statesmen of today are more dependent on the refined economic system, on public opinion. With all the progress in the West, this development easily leads to the "masses", whereby the individual can no longer bring out his qualities as freely as he did previously.

Only the East, with the inner structure of its autocratic regime is more independent in this. "Public opinion" is not valued too highly in the East and is also foreign to the character of the Easterner. For that he is too much the product of the collective system and not an individual.

The 19th and 20th century are periods of great changes and

processes of fermentation. They are phenomena in the realm of world views, world economy and the social and religious field. We are in the midst of this spiritual and material controversy, without being aware of it during our short lifetime. Wars are not only terrible, disastrous periods, which are the fault of individuals only; they are also thunderstrokes amidst the rumbling of latent storms.

One should think during our century of progress in every realm that today, there could no longer be any "ideological" problems, for the solution of which wars would be fought. It was believed that the religious wars of the 16th and 17th century and the spiritual revolution in France at the turn of the 18th century would be the last wars.

This is not the case.¹ Democracy, bolshevism, national socialism and fascism are or respectively, were ideologies which cannot be denied and which have resulted in great controversies. The last two were in most of their goals impossible in a modern, progressive world. Their destructive power even succeeded in casting a spell on such educated and basically good-natured people as the German people. However, communism continues. Although its outer forms may conform to western conceptions, this change may be of a strategic nature. Essentially, it remains what it is - a world which seems weird and foreign to us. This the German people and the German Wehrmacht of yesterday also felt and therefore desperately fought to the point of self-sacrifice. Today, too, after complete collapse and utter elimination, the German people - during the free elections in the three western zones - with their

votes demonstrated their rejection of this world which is foreign to us.

As a western nation, we would have deserved a better political leadership than that of insanity. Now it is over - but I believe that our philosophy shall remain opposed to that of the eastern world.

However, "ideology" is an important part of the emotions, the feelings of a people, i. e. of public opinion, which every statesman has to consider.

From a socialistic point of view, the ideas of the French revolution are still active. However, the revolutionary socialism has in the West developed into the evolutionary socialism which affirms the State and which no longer will have anything to do with communistic ideas of bolshevistic origin. In 1919, the German people still fought an inner conflict regarding this - today, this has been overcome, for the socialism of our able working masses is positive and constructive.

In the East, laborers and farmers (kolkhoz - (transl: collective farms) are also socialized, but nobody will want to assert that this is "democratic." The danger of the East lies in its docile and apathetic masses, which are easily led and have to be used as a whole in every respect, in peace as well as war. Free speech, trade unions and strikes are unknown to them. They work - voluntarily or not - often ten hours instead of eight, and they work cheaply. This is significant, for this is a power similar to the socialism for which Hitler was striving.

Sociological and social changes go hand in hand. Old privileges are abolished, "classes" are transformed and new higher levels are developed.

In the religious field too, deviations must develop; there is no longer any room for old and antiquated discriminations, the world has become too open and too progressive for that. Understanding leaders of churches and religious organizations shall have to watch these developments, in order to be able to secure a true world religion of tolerance.

From a military point of view, war remains an evil and a last resort of all sensible politics. War too is being revolutionized. The effect of the new known weapons of war, the further development of the air force, rocket bombs, etc., extends to the far corners of the earth. Great world powers require the world-map, the globe for their considerations, which are no longer "operational" but purely strategic. They can no longer protect themselves through tactical strong points a few kilometers in area, but require wide and deep outpost areas, which then comprise their sphere of interest. Thus, the world has become small, but the modern means of destruction have assumed large proportions. Therefore, only the world-atlas can be the answer for strategic world questions; Europe, Africa, etc. have become merely operational parts of the whole.

Therefore, on this earth, it is no longer possible for many, but only very few great men to rule; everything else has to adjust itself one way or another.

There is also another form of war, without guns, tanks and airplanes. It is the "war" of infiltration, agitation and undermining of people's

minds! Here, "offensive war" is not yet defined, because the "official" statesmen do not consider themselves responsible. However, the actual events in the world show what the real aim is. The East excels in this art!

However, the change in the field of world economics remains the most important. Everyman wants to get on well! He demands of his statesman to see to it! Economics have always been the basis of all politics, but in the 20th century, it involves the very existence of the great powers.

The culture and civilization of our western world is exacting, sensitive and complicated. No statesman could afford to take measures which would bring about economic decline. Outwardly, however, he has to make sure that the economic possibilities are sustained and not lost. For if this were the case with a modern western nation, it would definitely disintegrate. The more a state is industrialized, the more extensive is its economy, the less "competition" can be tolerated. The earth has become too small to allow many to be on first place. Whenever two large business concerns are side by side, there are only two possibilities: they unite or fight each other.

The great outlet markets have become scarce or destroyed, or are disputed! However, world powers need them in order to dispose of their goods.

The civilization and culture of the eastern world is not exacting and is not as complicated. Its people are insensitive and their nerves

can stand much which is unbearable for us. The East too possesses tremendous space and natural resources, all of which have not yet been uncovered by far. Technically, it is also only in the process of construction. For that, it avails itself of trained workers from its own ranks and - stolen knowledge and brainwork of abducted Germans.

Bolshevism has the power to unearth the latent treasures through slave labor. These dangers of economic competition in Eurasia do not as yet exist, but these will follow only after 10 - 20 years of construction of this tremendous machine. One would like to hope and say: "Videant consules!" (transl: Look ahead, statesmen!)

Western Europe is only a heap of ruins on the continent! Only France is on the map - 40 million people! Everything else is fragmentary and ??? Nothing but small, weak, sore points and places, "minor states", similar to the Europe map in Germany a hundred years ago! Thus, small Western Europe remains a weak, vulnerable front, a sensitive spot on the world map.

Here, aid for all is possible only if these weak formations become subordinated to a great structure of the remaining world sea powers, willingly joining same and allowing themselves to be led. This concerns the mutual interest of all and represents life-preserving "Realpolitik" and politics based on reason which the small people must adopt if they do not want to have to face dangers, which, for the moment, may be banished by politics, but which could, some day, be revived.

Therefore, Western Europe needs West-European education. This has

to begin with the clear purpose, and this foundation is then strengthened through an interlinked economy; politics will then take care of itself.

Europe has become old. It has fulfilled a great mission and now has to join forces.

The world lives at high speed and keeps going - the great problems still have not yet been settled and solved.

Our civilization, however, will continue only if it collaborates with the great western world. The remaining fragments of the continent cannot exist for long alone and by themselves. This calls for a determined change in thinking.

Therefore, thinking in terms of a scale of 1: 1000,000, I see the catastrophe of the second world war only as an explosion in the midst of a continuing evolution in all realms of human life.

War histories and military reflections of the soldier are definitely important for same, but they are not the essential thing. That would be an NGO's point of view of a pigheaded professional soldier.

This past war too, we must see from a deeper and more future-minded point of view! Only then can one learn to prevent worse - or to recognize it. To this extent, historic-philosophic reflections on the war of 1939/45, as seen from a higher field of vision, can only be useful for all parties concerned.